

The Whole Armor of God *Ephesians 6:10-20*

Discipline

As we teach our children about the things of God we can help them become aware of the foundation of godly behavior. We can prevent confusion and frustration by helping them understand what God requires of us. The first step is that they need to know the rules.

A frequently asked question is, “how do you handle discipline problems in the classroom?” This is an important question to answer because the teaching and learning process can be greatly hindered when member(s) of a class are out of control. To begin, you need to have a clear understanding about the difference between discipline and punishment. Next, you need to have a set of rules that you have gone over with your students and that they understand.

The purpose of discipline is to help the student develop self-control and grow in Christian maturity. In order for discipline to work, the student needs to have a positive attitude toward the rules and the standard of conduct that is expected of him. Eventually the external controls put on the student are replaced with inner controls because the student has internalized the values and standards.

The purpose of punishment is that a child suffers the consequences for wrong behavior. This is not the same as discipline. Discipline is used to conquer rebellion and bring a child to the point of submitting to the rules and authority. Discipline is about prevention, correction and guidance. Punishment is the consequences for doing wrong or sinful actions that have already taken place.

God disciplines those whom He loves, Hebrews 12:5-11. When God disciplines, He is always motivated by love. His purpose in correction is to develop self-motivated obedience and righteousness.

In new situations children are not always sure about what is expected of them. Knowing what they should do gives them a sense of security. There are times children just forget the boundaries and there are other times they will completely ignore the boundaries. As a teacher, you need to be aware of why your students are stepping outside the rules and deal with the situation accordingly.

Fortunately, God keeps the rules pretty simple—love Him, love others. He not only gives this code of conduct (the Ten Commandments), but He will help the humble heart to understand that His commandments are genuinely holy, just and good—just like Him.

It is important that you be firm with your students, not harsh. You do not want to appear to be unkind or unloving toward any of your students. It will be impossible for you to communicate God’s love if you do not love your students.

Children want to know the rules and they do respect and enjoy the security rules provide. The rules may be effectively communicated by the inflection in your voice. Shouting is not necessary. Always follow through on the

directions and commands you have given. By all means, be consistent.

Jesus lived by the Ten Commandments and the rule to love God and love others. As He lived the code of conduct, He revealed the true depths of God's Law. He explained very clearly that He did not come to do away with the Law but to fulfill it. And He was very clear about the intent of the Law. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and Greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37-39). Jesus truly fulfilled the spirit of this great law of love by His life.

Some discipline techniques for when a child becomes out of control are as follows:

- "And Patrick, after Zacchaeus climbed the tree he..." This tells Patrick you are well aware he is having a problem with self-discipline.
- If you are walking around the room, casually walk over to a disruptive child and put your hand gently on his shoulder and shake your head, no. The child will know what you are doing.
- When a child is working on a craft project at the worktable and is out of control, reach over and put your hand carefully on his and make eye contact. Continue the eye contact until he changes his behavior.
- Above all never lose control and lash out physically or with verbal ridicule. Always show the child respect.
- There are times it is necessary to remove a child from the room and talk with him about his behavior.

The key to success as stated before is in the preparation. The better prepared you are the more confidence you will have. It will also be obvious to your students that you take your Bible teaching seriously. Applying godly principles to our lives is a lifetime process. We need to absorb them into our hearts and minds in order to introduce them

into action. When disruption occurs, you will be able to do something as simple as making eye contact or saying a child's name and continue the teaching process.

Cooperation from parents is essential if the best interest of the child is to be met. Do not hesitate to talk to the parents of a child that is having a behavior problem in your classroom. You should not fear the parents' reaction. Parents can give insights as to why their child may be acting up. They also can correct the problem because they have the ultimate authority.

During your private prayer time, ask God for the direction and strength you need to love and help even the most unruly child. A child that is habitually out of control needs help. Talk to God about the child and He will give the wisdom you need to meet every child's needs. A child that is a continual problem should not be looked at like a problem but as one who needs help.

Whether we want to admit it or not, teachers can at times be the source of the problem. Therefore, you hold the key to the success of your classroom and solving any problems that may arise. Evaluate yourself first and then the surroundings. Ask yourself, "are there too many children for the space? Is the room clean and tidy? Is there disruptive noises coming from outside? Am I constantly being interrupted? Do I have plenty of materials so my students don't have to wait so long to use the scissors or crayons?"

As a teacher of God's Word, use the following certificates to help your students understand the rules you expect them to follow. Make a copy for each student to sign. A good time to hand out these certificates is on the first day of class. Go over the rules so everyone is aware of what is expected.